

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 06846 121718Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 6846

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, MILI, PBOR, IS, LE
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: TEL AVIV 6687

. I MET WITH EZER WEIZMAN AT 1230 SEPTEMBER 12 TO
RECEIVE THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO OUR
REQUEST FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN IMPLEMENTING PHASE III
OF THE SHTOURA AGREEMENT. IT WAS SIMPLE AND DIRECT:
A. ISRAEL APPROVES AND WILL SUPPORT A CEASE FIRE IN
SOUTHERN LEBANON, BUT CONTINGENT UPON ALL THE PLO UNITS
WITHDRAWING TO POSITIONS NORTH AND WEST OF THE LITANI
RIVER (BOTH FROM THE AREA NORTHWEST OF BINT JUBAYL AND
THE ARQOUB);
B. ISRAEL IS PREPARED TO OFFER AN IMMEDIATE CEASE
FIRE, WHICH THEY ARE CONFIDENT THEY CAN DELIVER, TO
FACILITATE THE WITHDRAWAL, IF THEY ARE ASSURED THIS
CONDITION WILL BE MET.

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2. I ASKED WHAT ACTIONS THEY CONTEMPLATED IF SARKIS
AND BOUTROS COULD NOT MEET THIS CONDITION. WEIZMAN
RESPONDED,
A. "WE WILL CONTINUE WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW," AND
B. WE SEE NO REASON TO ENLARGE (IDF) ACTIVITIES AT
PRESENT."

3. I PRESSED TO FIND OUT WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITY OR RESPONSE WE COULD EXPECT FROM THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS. WEIZMAN ANSWERED, "I THINK THE CHRISTIANS WILL CONTINUE AS AT PRESENT, THEY CONTINUE TO RELY ON US RATHER THAN THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON FOR THEIR SUPPORT; THEY HAVE NO CONFIDENCE THAT THE PLO WILL EVER WITHDRAW."

4. I SAID THAT BASED ON HIS RESPONSE I FEARED THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD BE UNABLE TO GET THE PLO TO MOVE AT ALL, AND THAT ISRAEL AND THE CHRISTIANS WOULD FACE THE CONTINUATION OF BLOODY CONFLICT WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND PLO, AS OPPOSED TO THE STIPULATED 850 MAXIMUM OF PERMITTED UNDER THE AGREEMENT. WEIZMAN REQUESTED, "PLEASE SEE IF YOU CAN USE YOUR GOOD OFFICES TO ARRANGE FOR THE PLO TO MOVE NORTH OF THE LITANI." REFERRING TO A MAP DEPICTING THE AREAS IN WHICH THE PLO WOULD REMAIN UNDER THE AGREEMENT, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY IN ITS PROJECTED POSITIONS AND NUMBERS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE PLO IN ITS PROJECTED POSITIONS AND NUMBERS. HE ALSO USED THE MAP TO EMPHASIZE THAT AN ADDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL BY THE PLO TO THE NORTH AND NORTHWEST OF ONLY 10 TO 15 KILOMETERS WOULD ACHIEVE NOT ONLY AN EFFECTIVE CEASE FIRE BUT ALSO A SECURE BORDER FOR ISRAEL.

5. TO ENSURE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOI I
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REVIEWED THE KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR PRESENTATION AGAIN. WEIZMAN SAID THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT RESPECT NOR URGE THE CHRISTIANS TO SUPPORT THE CEASE FIRE UNLESS ALL PLO FORCES MOVED BEYOND THE LITANI, BUT THAT THE PRESENT LEVEL OF ISRAELI MILITARY ACTIVITY WOULD NOT ESCALATE, AT LEAST WHILE WE PURSUED THE MATTER FURTHER WITH SARKIS. I ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY OF A CHANGE IN THEIR POSITION. WEIZMAN REPLIED THAT THE GOI RESPONSE WAS "A REQUEST AND NOT A CONTINGENT ANSWER." HE AGAIN REITERATED THAT THE U.S. SHOULD USE ITS "GOOD OFFICES" TO GET THE PLO TO WITHDRAW TO NORTH OF THE LITANI AND THAT THE GOI WOULD BE PREPARED TO RECONSIDER THE SITUATION "AFTER THE NEW YEAR," (I.E. AFTER SEPTEMBER 15).

6. COMMENT: I WAS TOO SANGUINE IN REFTTEL. IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE ISRAELIS BELIEVE THE EXTENT OF THE PLO WITHDRAWAL TO BE NEGOTIABLE, THAT THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS IS STILL UNDERWAY, AND THAT THEY INTEND TO BE TOUGH NEGOTIATORS. TIME URGENCY WHICH WAS PRESENTED AS CRITICAL SEVERAL WEEKS AGO DID NOT SURFACE AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR. THEIR PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE NOW APPEARS TO BE THE COMPLETE REMOVAL OF THE PLO AS A THREAT TO

THEIR BORDER WITH LEBANON, AND THEY SEE A CHANCE TO
ACHIEVE IT BY HANGING TOUGH. THE NEXT MOVE, I FEAR,
IS TO SEE WHAT MORE CAN BE ACHIEVED IN BEIRUT.
LEWIS

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NNN

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